

how soon he would cease to imagine such an efficacy in his exhortations, if the greater number of his hearers could sincerely and accurately tell him, toward the end of the week, in what degree these admonitions had affected and governed them, in opposition to their corrupt tendencies, their habits, and their temptations ! What would be, in the five or six days, the number of the moments and the instances in which these instructions would be proved to have been effectual, compared with the whole number of moments and circumstances to which they were applicable by appropriateness of instruction and warning ? How often, while hearing such a week's detail of the lives of a considerable proportion of a congregation, a man would have occasion to say, By whose instructions were these persons influenced *then*, in that neglect of devout exercises, that excess of levity, that waste of time, that avowed contempt of religion, that language of pro-faneness and imprecation, those contrivances of selfishness, those paroxysms of passion, that study of sensuality, or that habitual general obduracy in evil ?

But the preacher to whose sanguine temperament I am reluctantly applying these cooling suggestions, may tell me, that it is not by means of any force which *he* can throw into his religious instructions, that he expects them to be efficacious ; but that he believes a *divine* energy will accompany what is undoubtedly a message from heaven, I am pleased with the piety, and the sound judgment (as I esteem it), with which he expects the conversion of careless or hardened men from nothing less than an operation strictly considered as of divine power. But I would remind him, that the probability, at any given season, that such a power will intervene, must be in proportion to the frequency or infrequency with which its intervention is actually manifested in the general course of experience ; that is, in proportion to the number of happy transformations of character which we see taking place under the efficacy of religious truth. He must admit this to be substantially the rule : if he require that it be modified by the consideration of promises and signs from the Supreme Power of the *near approach* of an augmented divine interference for the efficacy of religion I shall willingly admit what I can of such a reason for conceding such a modification.

Reformers in general are very apt to overrate the power of the means by which their theories are to be realized. They